

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1 1. A method for optimizing output device utilization on a network
2 including at least one output device, the method comprising:

- 3 (a) tracking utilization information for each output device;
4 (b) analyzing the utilization information for optimization
5 opportunities; and,
6 (c) configuring the network to exploit the optimization
7 opportunities.

1 2. The method of claim 1 wherein tracking utilization information
2 includes:

- 3 (a) periodically retrieving the utilization information; and,
4 (b) archiving the retrieved utilization information.

1 3. The method of claim 1 wherein tracking utilization information
2 includes tracking utilization information selectively from network print clients,
3 network print servers and network output devices.

1 4. The method of claim 1 wherein analyzing the utilization information
2 includes searching selectively for underused and overused output devices.

1 5. The method of claim 1 wherein analyzing the utilization information
2 for optimization opportunities includes applying rules to the utilization
3 information.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein applying rules to the utilization information includes selectively optimizing for lowest cost, highest quality, soonest output and output closest to an originating print client.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein configuring the network includes selectively configuring network print clients, network print servers and network output devices.

8. A system for optimizing output device utilization on a network including at least one output device, the system comprising:

- (a) a monitor configured to track utilization information for each output device;
- (b) an inspector configured to analyze the utilization information for optimization opportunities; and,
- (c) an administrator configured to configure the network to exploit the optimization opportunities.

9. The system of claim 8 wherein the monitor includes:

- (a) a retriever configured to periodically retrieve the utilization information; and,
- (b) a utilization log configured to archive the retrieved utilization information.

10. The system of claim 8 wherein the monitor is further configured to track utilization information selectively from network print clients, network print servers and network output devices.

11. The system of claim 8 wherein the inspector includes an investigator configured to search selectively for underused and overused output devices.

1 12. The system of claim 8 wherein the inspector includes a manager
2 configured to apply rules to the utilization information.

1 13. The system of claim 12 wherein the manager includes an optimizer
2 configured to selectively optimize for lowest cost, highest quality, soonest
3 output and output closest to an originating print client.

1 14. The system of claim 8 wherein the administrator is further
2 configured to selectively configure network print clients, network print servers
3 and network output devices.

1 15. A program storage device readable by a computer, tangibly
2 embodying a program, applet or instructions executable by the computer to
3 perform method steps for optimizing output device utilization on a network
4 including at least one output devices, the method steps comprising:

- 5 (a) tracking utilization information for each output device;
6 (b) analyzing the utilization information for optimization
7 opportunities; and,
8 (c) configuring the network to exploit the optimization
9 opportunities.

1 16. The program storage device of claim 15 wherein the method step
2 of tracking utilization information includes:

- 3 (a) periodically retrieving the utilization information; and,
4 (b) archiving the retrieved utilization information.

1 17. The program storage device of claim 15 wherein the method step
2 of tracking utilization information includes tracking utilization information

1 18. The program storage device of claim 15 wherein the method step
2 of analyzing the utilization information includes searching selectively for
3 underused and overused output devices.

1 19. The program storage device of claim 15 wherein the method step
2 of analyzing the utilization information for optimization opportunities includes
3 applying rules to the utilization information.

1 20. The program storage device of claim 15 wherein the method step
2 of configuring the network includes selectively configuring network print clients,
3 network print servers and network output devices.